

William Nicholson

My version of the story can be told in a few words. The regiment I was in was the 13th Light Dragoons. Captain Oldham was in command, and he was shot in the charge. We knew that the order given was a blunder, and when we started we never expected to come back alive. About half-way down the valley we could scarcely see one another, because, the ground being at the time very dry, the horses' hoofs and the shot and shell that were fired ploughed the ground making the air thick with dust and smoke. In consequence of this we could not see the enemy till we were close to them. Nothing was said by the men as they rode down the valley; but several times Lord Cardigan called out, "Keep together, men; keep steady." When we got to the guns everything seemed in such confusion that we hardly knew what we were about. The Russians retired from the guns, and were pursued by some of us down to the river Tchernaya, into which many of the enemy were driven in their confusion. About 100 yards from the guns my horse was shot under me, and I afterwards succeeded in capturing another, which was riderless, and joined the 11th Hussars, with which regiment I returned from the charge.

I received a lance-wound in the side, and was also hurt by portions of shells striking me in the face, the scars from which I shall carry to my grave. At the time, owing to excitement and one thing and another, you don't feel the wounds that you receive; but when your blood has cooled down a bit, and you are in a calmer frame of mind, you begin to feel the wounds. The Chasseurs d'Afrique did signal service to us in covering our retreat, and when we arrived at the top of the valley we were well-received by our comrades, many of whom, however, wore a sad expression on their faces. Being wounded, I was afterwards conveyed, with a number of others, in the ambulance van and shipped to Scutari.